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THE LEAVES OF THE TREE

BY ARTHUR C. BENSON

HENRY SIDGWICK

HENRY SIDGWICK was born in 1838, the son of a clergyman, Headmaster of Skipton Grammar School. His grandfather, William Sidgwick, was a self-made man, a wealthy cotton-spinner, who had married a Miss Benson, and thus my father, Archbishop Benson, was Henry Sidgwick's second cousin. The other members of the family who survived infancy were William Carr Sidgwick, formerly Fellow and Tutor of Merton College, Arthur Sidgwick, a Rugby Master, and later Tutor of Corpus College, Oxford, and my mother.

There was a marked intellectual bent in the whole clan. I once made out a careful record of their performances. I forget now the exact details, but I think that it came out that something like twelve members of the united families had taken first classes at the University, and that over twenty of them had published books of some kind or another. I sent the particulars to Sir Francis Galton, in answer to one of his circulars, and he replied that it was the most remarkable case of kindred aptitude that had ever come under his notice.

Henry Sidgwick was at school at Rugby, where his widowed mother resided. He was not proficient in athletics and lived a rather secluded school life, with the background of a very happy home circle. My father was then a Rugby Master and lived with the Sidgwicks. Henry Sidgwick went on to Trinity College, Cambridge, at the age of seventeen, as a Scholar. Though he had a year of ill health, he came out as Senior Classic and a Wrangler. He was elected to a Fellowship at Trinity and took up the study of Moral Philosophy. He held a College Lectureship and was eventu-

ally made Professor of Moral Philosophy. He married, in 1876, a sister of Mr. Arthur Balfour, and he died in 1900, at the age of sixty-two, after a brief illness.

Such is the summary of a life which, as far as external incidents go, must seem extremely uneventful, though it was full of intellectual and social activities. Apart from his teaching and his books, Henry Sidgwick took a very active part in the administration of the University. Much of his time in later years was given to the work of the Psychical Society, and the investigation of spiritualistic phenomena. He was one of the chief pioneers of women's education; and the close of his life was spent at Newnham College, of which his wife was the Principal. He used to say, laughingly, that he supposed he was one of the few people in England whose position in his home was simply that of husband of the occupier.

The analysis of academical politics is an intricate business. and, to outsiders, a peculiarly uninteresting one. It will suffice to say that Sidgwick's position at Cambridge was a singular one. When he first took a hand in University organization, he was looked upon as rather an unpractical man, with dangerously subversive tendencies, and with so marked a power of seeing both sides of a question that he could never be depended upon to follow a definite line. He ended by being one of the most trusted and respected members of the oligarchy which rules Cambridge, distinguished "for public spirit, for fairness, for industry in investigation, for dialectical skill." The Bishop of Bristol, who held for many years a prominent place in the administration of the University, said that if Sidgwick had been present at a meeting, and had fairly discussed a matter, the members of the particular Board at least knew this—that there was not any obviously better plan to be conceived, and that they had not lost sight of any main considerations. Professor Henry Jackson, replying to the criticism that Sidgwick was a man who "sat on the fence," said that it was a complete mistake. "The man who 'sits on the fence' is one who, whether he has or has not definite convictions, is reluctant to declare himself. . . . Sidgwick's conclusions were often compromises, and might change surprisingly; but they were always exactly thought out, confidently affirmed and eagerly defended." At the same time, the fact cannot be overlooked that, in matters of policy, Sidgwick's mind was liable to

great and scrupulous oscillations, which bewildered supporters and opponents alike; this arose partly from a genuine and deep-seated diffidence, and still more from a conscientious dread of not doing full justice to the opinions of those with whom he began by disagreeing.

Of his direct educational work it may be said that Henry Sidgwick was undoubtedly a teacher for the few rather than for the many. He once accepted a Mastership at Rugby from Temple, and wisely withdrew his acceptance. He began his teaching work by instructing the pass-men at Trinity; and he used to tell an amusing story about this. One evening at a party he saw one of his class, who had just taken his degree, making his way across the room, with great diffidence, to speak to him. The man drew near, and then said that he wished to express his gratitude for Sidgwick's lectures. They were the best lectures, he said, he had ever attended, with the exception of Professor Kingsley's History lectures; and then, to salve the wound which might have been inflicted by the comparison, he added, "But, of course, Professor Kingsley's lectures are intended to improve the mind."

Sidgwick's main work was done in Moral Philosophy. His classes were never large, the subject not being one which attracted many students; but the result was that the quality was high, so that for years he had in his hands the opportunity of affecting and forming perhaps the most subtle and lucid minds of the successive Cambridge generations. The names of Maitland, of Archdeacon Cunningham, of Mr. Arthur Balfour, may serve as instances of men who recognized in Sidgwick the most inspiring intellectual force they had ever encountered. As a teacher he was admirably patient and sympathetic, made the kindest efforts to overcome shyness, to elicit a statement of difficulties genuinely felt, and thought no time wasted in making an intricacy clear. His pupils learned from him to be transparently honest and sincere in thought, and left him determined that they would suspect dogmatism, banish prepossessions and arrive steadfastly at conclusions, however much they might dread or dislike the results. Above all, he had not the least desire to make disciples or to enforce opinions—"I would not if I could," he said, "and I could not if I would, say anything which would make philosophy—my philosophy—popular." It is difficult to summarize his work as an original writer,

or to make any forecast of the value which posterity may attach to his books. What constitutes the chief difficulty is that he was intensely interested in the practical problems of his day, both ethical and political; but public discussion shifts its channel, and an appeal to principles, which appear inevitable and all-important in one decade, seems a barren and unsubstantial argument in the next. It is, too, perhaps true to say that his historical sense was not strong, and that his metaphysical mind tried to measure by ratios and modes what is incapable of being measured by these means. So I will leave his books to justify themselves; their lucidity and thoroughness are indisputable, and they contained, in certain directions, for his own generation, the maximum of attainable and communicable truth. It may be said, speaking generally, that Sidgwick envied the faith that issued in action. But he felt still more strongly that the time had not come in philosophy to formulate conclusions; that the philosopher was still feeling his way, and that the only enthusiasm he could dare to nourish was the ardor of the quest. He felt himself bound upon a narrow path and upon an uncertain journey. The one hope was to be perfectly sincere with himself, and to do analytical work, however unproductive, which would not need to be done again. The same principle actuated him in his work for the Psychical Society. There was current an immense mass of vague records and fluid traditions of abnormal experiences loosely believed to be supernatural. There might or there might not be definite truth underlying these stories, which might possibly even afford scientific evidence of the continuance of the life of the soul. But Sidgwick had no desire to welcome or anticipate indications of this for his own personal satisfaction. He rather determined patiently to wade through the mud, to sift the rubbish-heaps of human imagination, to explore the dreariest, most humiliating, most diseased province of human thought, the craving after self-persuasion, the hysterical self-deception, the yielding to delusive terrors, the exaggerations of morbid hallucinations. His aim in all this was not the desire to say, "Am I justified in believing this to be true?" but, "Am I justified in believing that I have excluded all possibilities of deception?" The eventual result is that certain scientific probabilities are slowly emerging, and that many mysterious phenomena have been traced to their material original.

Henry Sidgwick always seemed to me to belong, both in temperament and in appearance, to the type of the Sage. He was so wise and mild and benignant! He took people as he found them, talked as graciously and as dexterously to the youngest and least conspicuous as to the learned and famous. He seemed to feel it both his duty and his pleasure to do his best for the entertainment of the adjacent person, whoever it might be, not to seek for congenial and appreciative people; and in a mixed company he seemed never to suffer from the temptation, to which I have known virtuous men of eminence to succumb, to gravitate secretly but surely, as by some hidden attraction, into the proximity of other men of eminence. He must have taken care, no doubt, to select suitable topics, because his topics always seemed appropriate to the company; but the scaffolding of the building was never visible: it appeared to be but a stream of easy talk, of light cast upon common things, so that they shone transfigured. He used to say that he had in early days been very shy, but that, realizing that it was a social duty to talk, he had determined always to talk, whether he had anything to say or not. It may be doubted whether the literal observance of this rule would tend in all cases to social ease; but with him it manifested itself in a quiet geniality, which was so natural and so self-possessed that it made the shyest interlocutor natural too. He was more than ready, too, to follow a lead. He did not soliloquize, nor monopolize the talk; there was no sense of performance about it. He had the art of weighing and appreciating the simplest reply, and the spontaneous and kindly attention he gave to any contribution to the conversation was of itself subtly flattering. He liked to elicit opinion, and could give the crudest sentiment a deft twist that made the author of it rate his own conversational powers more highly. One left his society feeling indeed that he had talked well, but also feeling that one had oneself made solid additions to the talk and affected the line of argument. For instance, he was often with us at Addington, and I used to feel that my father, much as he loved Henry Sidgwick, had a sort of terrified disapproval of his habits of thought. But though the ecclesiastical atmosphere was alien to Sidgwick, his talk with my father was mainly on ecclesiastical lines; and he seemed anxious to learn, for sympathetic reasons and not for controversial purposes, the current tendencies of Anglican

thought and activity. "I am always impressed here," he wrote at Addington in 1885, "with a strange sense of the vitality of the Church of England and its power of functioning intellectually and morally in the atmosphere of modern scientific and social thought. At Cambridge I get into the way of regarding it as something that once was alive and growing, but now exists merely because it is a pillar or buttress of uncertain value in a complicated edifice that no one wants just now to take to pieces. Here, however, I feel rather as if I were contemplating a big fish out of water, propelling itself smoothly and gayly on the highroad." The above extract is highly characteristic of him, in its humorous detachment, and its anxiety to see the inner spirit of an institution, even though it was on lines antagonistic to his own ideas. But I realized early, by some sort of unconscious divination, that there existed a sense of disappointment and even disapproval in my father's mind about my uncle. My father was to the bottom of his soul an ecclesiastic. He realized, as few people I have ever known did, the vital force of religion, the beautiful traditions and poetical appeal of Christianity, as interpreted and developed by the Church. Thus, though the tie between the two was deep rather than close, my father could never quite banish from his mind the thought that Henry Sidgwick's brilliance and consummate reasonableness might sow the seeds of doubt in the minds of us children; and though he loved him truly and respected him infinitely, he could not but regard him as a very formidable antagonist to the cause which he himself had most deeply at heart. There was just this amount of *gêne* between the two—that there was a large province of thought which had to be tacitly ignored. My father had no intention of discussing religious questions with Sidgwick, while Sidgwick had no sort of wish to initiate discussion. But when the two were once securely launched upon a safe subject, such as literature or Cambridge reminiscences, the give-and-take was delicious.

I shall never forget an evening spent at Hillside, the Sidgwicks' Cambridge house, in my early undergraduate days. It was a small party, and the principal guests were Professor Seeley and Lord Bowen. It always remains in my mind as the most brilliant conversation I have ever heard. Seeley came out of his shell and talked shrewdly and paradoxically, with the air and mien of a comfortable *abbé*.

Bowen, whose appearance, I know not why, reminded me of an intelligent Board-school master, was no doubt the most attractive talker of the three, because of the extraordinary power of transition that he possessed. His humor was entrancing—so delicate and so lambent; and he was able, too, to express deep emotion without the least sense of incongruity or affectation. But even so, I remember feeling that my uncle carried off the palm, because his talk seemed so entirely uncalculated and devised—though that is hardly the right word, because there was no touch of artificiality about it—to draw out and set off the brilliance of his guests.

At the other end of the scale I remember a party at Cambridge, at which a lady was present whom it was thought desirable to ask, but who was little used to social functions. She suffered at first from obvious nervousness; but it fell to Henry Sidgwick to take her in to dinner, and he began to talk to her at once about the education of her children. The bait proved incredibly successful: it was probably the only subject in the world on which she had both views and experience; and she left the house with the manifest consciousness of having had an agreeable evening, having held her own with an eminent man and having appeared in the light of a brilliant educational theorist, with the additional advantage of having been enabled to put her theories to a practical test.

Yet Sidgwick, too, had his social crises to endure. He used to say that once, at an evening party, his hostess brought up to him a young and beautiful damsel, like Iphigenia to the altar, and said, "Mr. Sidgwick, here is a young lady who wishes to have the pleasure of being presented to you." The maiden stared at him with wide and fawn-like eyes, while he in vain endeavored to think of something appropriate and impressive to say. When at last a thought came into his mind, he said that he realized that it would have sufficed if it had been said earlier, but that after so long a pause something more striking was required. The same terrible process continued, thoughts arriving belatedly and each of inadequate weight, till at last the hostess, observing the imbroglio, came and led the young lady away again without a word having passed between the pair. The memory of this was so haunting, Sidgwick said, that he at once set to and devised a remark, which he claimed would be appropriate, interesting and amusing, on any occasion,

at any hour, to any person of any age, sex or nation. But he refused ever to part with so precious a talisman, and the secret was never known.

He had a wonderful verbal memory and could quote copiously and accurately. He told us once that he had discovered a method of defying seasickness on a Channel crossing—which was to take his stand in some secluded part of the vessel, and to pour out audibly and rhetorically his repertory of English verse, accompanying it with a good deal of emphatic gesticulation. He said that he could go on repeating poetry continuously, if he did not force the pace, for about a couple of hours. I believe that the first experiment was successful and that he secured immunity from nausea. But he said that the second time that he tried it he was interrupted by one of the officers with a message from the captain begging him to desist, on the ground that some of the lady passengers were frightened by his behavior, being under the impression that he was mentally deranged. He complied with the request, and, deprived of its intellectual prophylactic, his brain succumbed to physical sensations.

But part of the charm of his literary talk, of which I had considerable experience, was that he could and did illustrate his points with apt and beautiful quotations most feelingly delivered. As a rule, people who can quote authors at length can rarely be persuaded to desist. One of the most tiresome conversations I have ever heard was one that took place between two accurate phonetic men, lovers of Dickens; and as Carlyle said of Coleridge's talk, to sit still and be pumped into never can be an exhilarating process. While, on the other hand, the men who have a critical appreciation of an author can seldom support their arches on solid piers of evidence and still less produce that evidence with dramatic or lyrical emphasis.

I always felt that the intellectual side of Henry Sidgwick's mind overbalanced and cast into the shade the poetical and imaginative side. He wrote a few lyrics which are felicitous and moving, and I have heard him confess that he sincerely envied the poetical vocation. He had, too, a really wonderful gift for improvising stories, which he was perfectly ready to exercise for us as children. I can remember even now the details of the story of the King who was haunted by a gnat-like voice in his ear that said, "Dig," and when at last he yielded to the suggestion and found an

abundance of curious things said, "Deeper," till at last he came to a room where everything was green. It was a story of epical volume and a chapter was always ready for us. And I can still recollect the thrill with which I once realized, as a small boy in my grandmother's house at Rugby, the blissful fact that every one else in the house but Uncle Henry and myself were going out to dinner; how I stole upon his secure hour and demanded that the story of the Green Room should be *finished*; how he put his book aside with a laugh, and while I played with the buttons of his waistcoat the strange and beautiful dénouement unrolled itself—so that for a day at least I was in the proud position, among my envious brothers and sisters, of knowing what had really happened and withholding the information.

In appearance, in later years, Henry Sidgwick was the only man I have ever seen who had something of the nobleness of mien, the kindly dignity and the unapproachable antiquity of the elders in Blake's designs of the Book of Job. He wore his massed hair rather long, in ambrosial waves, like a Greek god. His beard, of fine silky texture and irregular outline, seemed to flow liquidly from his face rather than to have been applied to it. As a rule, a man with so full a beard seems either embarrassed by it or involved in it and to peep from its tangled brake like a face from a bush. But with him it adorned and amplified his finely chiselled features, his great brow and clear-cut nose. He was small of stature and had very delicate hands, which he used much in gestures that were elucidatory rather than emphatic. He often played with his beard, stroking it or lifting it to his face. His features in repose, with the uplifted eyebrows, had a pensive, almost melancholy air. But this was transfigured in talk by the sweetest and most child-like of smiles. His voice was soft and high-pitched and had at times a note of weariness about it. But he could modulate it very beautifully for emphasis or emotional effect; while his reciting of poetry was one of the most thrilling and enchanting things I ever heard. He began in a high chant, with a rich rhetorical cadence. May I confess that it seldom failed to bring tears to my eyes, perhaps not less because at the end of a quotation I have often seen the water stand in his own. His stammer was well known, but he had so trained himself to disregard it that he never gave any sense of awkwardness or of delay to his hearers. He

used to throw his head back to disengage an unruly consonant, and, strange to say, the impediment became a positive ornament to his talk, enabling him to bring out a point with a quaint and charming emphasis.

He had, too, many little attractive mannerisms. It used to be a pleasure to me to see how daintily and leisurely he manipulated his food, with a sort of bird-like selection. He had, too, an absent-mindedness which is to me an invariable charm, because it gives a sense of tranquil absorption in a train of thought, a quiet aloofness from mundane things. He was sensitive about this and disliked feeling that he had behaved in an unusual manner. I remember once, when he was staying with us at Truro, he was standing at the end of breakfast on the hearth rug, sipping his tea and discussing some subject with great animation. The bell rang for chapel, and he walked down the dark passage with us, continuing his talk, holding the cup in one hand and emphasizing his points with the spoon in the other. Not until he had taken his place in the stalls did he become aware that he was acting in an unaccustomed manner. I remember his look of sudden bewilderment and his relief when the sympathetic butler, who had been awaiting his opportunity, came up and with a deferential bow removed the cup as though it were a semi-ecclesiastical ceremony.

He was wholly indifferent to dress, but contrived, by a sort of natural dignity and grace, to look well in whatever he wore. He affected a large black soft hat of a clerical type, or on state occasions a tall hat. He was always a conspicuous figure. In Cambridge the most characteristic thing about him was that he frequently ran in the street even in cap and gown. This had its origin in his being told by his doctor to take more exercise and advised to ride; he pleaded lack of time, but on eliciting the fact that running was better exercise than walking he determined to put as much exercise as possible into necessary transits. He put in "Who's Who," under the head of his recreations, "Novel-reading and a little walking"; but he was not deficient in agility, and I remember him as a very keen and perfectly efficient lawn-tennis player.

One characteristic of him was his apparently invariable cheerfulness. He laughed often, a low, musical, rather lazy laugh, which gave a sense of great contentment. His diary is rather a melancholy record; but this was not at all the

case with his talk, which was always light, humorous and comfortable. He talked a good deal about himself, his views and experiences; but this never gave the least impression of egotism: what he said about himself seemed always said by way of comparison or in confirmation of the experiences of others. And then one had a sense of intimacy in all one's talks with him; he gave himself; he was never aloof or impersonal. Some eminent philosophers whom I have known never seemed to be really there. Their voices whispered dryly of mortal things, but one felt that what they said was merely like rain dropping from clouds which sailed above the earth and evacuated expressions rather than mingled with life. But Henry Sidgwick was always intensely human, interested in his circle, taking his part, anxious to establish communication with fellow travellers, as merry and wise as old Master Gaius in the Pilgrim's hostel. He never gave the sense of being preoccupied in important work, but anxious, not on principle, but by instinct, to join in anything that was going forward.

I remember being once deeply touched, just after I left Cambridge, by something that he said to me. He made me a gentle apology for not having seen more of me as an undergraduate. I did see him, as a matter of fact, fairly often, being every now and then bidden to come and lunch with him in his rooms in College at the end of his morning's work or dining at Hillside. But he added that he had always known and felt that my father was uneasy about his possible influence on my religious views, and that he had therefore made up his mind that he would not raise such questions at all, and that he would not encourage me to discuss such things; and that this had ended in his seeing less of me than he had wished. He added that he hoped that I should not misunderstand it, or put it down in any way to a lack of affection; for, indeed, it was rather the reverse. I do not think that I ever heard such a thing said more feelingly and delicately, and it gave me a sense of justice and high-mindedness which was intensely impressive.

Let me frankly admit that I always have considered the case of Henry Sidgwick to be a difficult one for any one to meet, who claims that a particular religious faith or a particular religious denomination monopolizes the production of a special type of character. Henry Sidgwick was brought up in orthodox Christianity; he was a devout and convinced

Christian as a boy; he had a more or less definite intention of taking Orders. These tendencies were fostered both in his own home, where his mother was a devout High Church-woman of the old-fashioned type, and still more by my father, whose influence over Henry Sidgwick at an impressionable time was very great. Indeed, I do not imagine that he ever submitted himself in his life so completely to the dominance of a single personality as he did to my father's. He speaks of my father's "unquestioned rule" over his mind in his school days and early undergraduate time: "When I did what he advised . . . it was not from awe of him and fear of blame, but from a conviction that he was right and a desire to be like him."

Yet he gave up all dogmatic faith. While in later life he grew to regard Christianity, from the sociological point of view, as indispensable and irreplaceable, he said that he found it "more and more incomprehensible how any one whom I feel really akin to myself in intellectual habits and culture can possibly find his religion in it. My own alienation from it is all the stronger because it is so purely intellectual." He goes on to say, "I am glad that so many superior people are able to become clergymen, but I am less and less able to understand how the result is brought about in so many thoroughly sincere and disinterested and able minds."

To speak with entire candor, the difficulty with him was to base any system of religion upon alleged facts, which he could not test, and which he did not believe to be true. He felt that in a matter of such infinite and vast importance as subscribing to an ontological explanation of the universe, he could not possibly found an active faith upon assumptions which he thought so unwarrantable.

And yet I have always considered Henry Sidgwick to be, on the whole, the one man I have known who, if he had been a Christian, would have been selected as almost uniformly exhibiting perhaps the most typical Christian qualities. He was so sincere, so simple-minded, so unselfish, so sympathetic, so utterly incapable of meanness or baseness, so guileless, so patient, of so crystalline a purity and sweetness of character, that he is one of the few men to whom I could honestly apply in the highest sense the word "saint."

I have heard this particular point discussed by some who knew him and loved him, and deeply regretted his dissidence

from Christian beliefs. I have heard it deliberately said by one such, that his Christianity was so instinctive, by inheritance and temperament and education, that it could not be uprooted by what was a merely intellectual scepticism. But if the deliberate abnegation of a particular form of religious faith is attended by no sort of moral deterioration; if, on the contrary, a character year by year grows stronger and purer, more devoted and unselfish, and at the same time no less appreciative of the moral effect of a definite belief, it becomes impossible to say that such qualities can only spring from a vital and genuine acceptance of certain dogmas. Dogmas are, after all, intellectual things, and some of the best Christians I have ever known would have been unable to explain, if indeed they could have correctly repeated, the clauses of the Nicene Creed. I have, indeed, often wondered whether the acceptance of dogma is not rather a symptom of spiritual affinity than a cause of spiritual progress, a case in fact of the *anima naturaliter Christiana*. Indeed, I say frankly that though the spiritual ideas of Christianity seem to me the highest and noblest that the world has ever seen, or is indeed likely to see, it seems to me impossible to believe that, of the various Christian denominations, we should find, if we knew all, that one is in possession of the exact truth of the matter, and that all others are in error; and why I should myself claim to be an Anglican is because the Anglican Communion appears to me to have the note of Christian liberty in a higher degree than any other Christian denomination.

Henry Sidgwick's agnosticism was not militant, and had no touch of proselytism about it. He wrote to my mother nearly thirty years ago, after a discussion of religious matters: "You see, I do not want to bring you to my position. I am not sorry exactly to be in the position myself; it has grave defects and disadvantages, but I feel in a way suited for it; I regard it as an inevitable point in the process of thought, and take it as a soldier takes a post of difficulty. But I cannot take the responsibility of drawing any one else to it, though neither can I take the responsibility of placing obstacles in the way." He realized to the full the eager hopefulness that would naturally result from the vivid acceptance of a comprehensive and definite faith.

What has always appeared to me so beautiful about his attitude was the utter absence from it of any sense of in-

tellectual contempt or mental impatience. To him the man who was conscious of spiritual experience was simply enviable. But he never tried to prove that this was a sign of intellectual inferiority. He had far too much respect for others' convictions, and tenderness for their aims and needs, to treat the matter as a sceptic often treats it—as a case of dangerous and perverse illusion from which he must try to rescue victims. And thus Sidgwick exhibited the truest kind of tolerance, very far from the dogmatism that masquerades under the guise of tolerance and is intolerant of any form of spiritual assertion. He knew only too well the unhappy isolation of the intellectual life. He saw as it were the happy flock inside the fold and himself outside. But this did not lead him, as it often leads a jealous sceptic, to desire at all costs to break down the security of the shielding wall, even though he could not so far sacrifice his sense of truth, his own patient analysis of actuality, as either to pretend to himself or to others that he was within, or to express his belief, with a sympathetic compromise, that the security of wall and gate might somehow turn out to be an objective one!

In early days, before he made up his mind to resign his Fellowship—the acceptance of which involved at that time a formal expression of belief in the distinctive tenets of the Church of England—he sometimes spoke with bitterness of his position, because he felt a sense of insincerity about it: “I am so bankrupt of most things men desire, that I would at least have a sort of savings-bank pittance of honesty . . . to be a humbug in one thing is to make a terrible breach in the citadel of morality. . . . You see, the greatest humbug of all is to pretend I do these things for the sake of my mother. I wish to heaven I did! Then had I been a better man. . . . At any rate, says Trevelyan, do something; sound advice; but something has hamstrung me.”

But after he had resigned his Fellowship, thereby sacrificing a competence and a position, these spectres were laid, the *clausum pectore volnus* was healed. Henceforward his wise and serene tolerance, the reward of his utter unworldliness, grew and increased.

And yet the record of his life as a whole, with all its subtlety and sense, its kindliness and sympathy, tends to give an impression of sadness, of endurance, almost of conscious failure, and of disappointment gently borne. Speaking generally, one would not much relish a biography which

gave one an impression of conscious success; but the lives of successful men, as a rule, give the sense of active interest and unconscious happiness, with here and there perhaps a touch of sorrow and gloom. But the life of Henry Sidgwick, judged by ordinary standards, may be considered successful, if it is success to be famous, to be influential, to be respected, honored and loved; and thus one finds oneself wondering what it was that he hoped to do which he did not do, and why there should be a feeling of a shadow and a burden often urgently present and seldom very far away. There were the materials for happiness, one would have thought, in the life of a man who found apparently the life for which he was best suited, whose prosperity was on the whole uninterrupted, who lived upon equal terms with the most interesting figures of the day, whose career was never hampered by any serious ill-health or untoward circumstance, who never fell and bled among the thorns of life, who never succumbed to any base or mean temptation, who carried out a programme of work with the approval and admiration of all concerned. If this is not a happy life, where can a happy life be found?

It is possible to conceive a Pharisaical critic saying that it was a life of which the spiritual glow was sacrificed to a cold intellectual ideal, and that a man who wilfully dismissed from his horizon the normal and traditional hopes of humanity was bound to be penalized. But in the presence of so high-minded, unworldly and unselfish a life as Henry Sidgwick's this criticism seems a kind of blasphemy, a sin against the Spirit—for the sin against the Spirit is the misinterpretation of all that is pure and true. No, the explanation of it lies elsewhere. Part of it was, no doubt, temperamental. There was a strain of melancholy in his nature which was distracted, no doubt, by work and activity, but which emerged when the frame was exhausted and the brain wearied. Moreover, his biography does not give a complete impression. It seems at first sight that to let a man tell his own life-story by diaries and letters is the nearest you can get to the truth of him. But in the case of hard brain-workers, especially if they have a strain of sadness in their temperament, the self-made record is not really the truest portrait. The diary is the record of the silent and introspective mood. Henry Sidgwick tended to confide to his journal the thoughts with which he was too brave, too kind, too unegotistical to

trouble the peace of others. And the letters, too, are documents composed in the intervals of hard work—not exactly for recreation, but for the sake of keeping alive the human relations which he treasured so dearly. But he did not expand in letters as he did in conversation, and those who were nearest to him say that he wrote them with a certain unwillingness of the flesh, and aimed at conciseness of statement rather than at the free imparting of intimate thought. Indeed, he regarded letter-writing as rather an interruption to his work. At the end of his life he expended some ingenuity in trying to confine his letters to a single page. He certainly must have given up a good deal of time to writing letters; he kept up close relations with his family and friends, and whenever a correspondent asked him a question or appealed to him for his opinion, he gave full measure, and answered patiently and kindly, with a great desire to do full justice to his correspondent's difficulties, and to give whatever help he could bestow. But his real and vital medium of communication was familiar talk, and this is the one effect that can hardly be reproduced, except in the rare cases where a Johnson meets with a Boswell. I suppose that a man's congenial method of expression is conditioned by his pace of thought. If he thinks more quickly than he writes, his letters are apt to be either disjointed or concentrated. And it always seems to me that Henry Sidgwick composed rather than wrote letters. Many of them are intensely interesting, when he was trying to elucidate some subject upon which he felt deeply. But his geniality, and the humor which was so strong a feature of his talk, evaporated in his letters; and though they do full justice to his kindness, his seriousness and his intellectual power, they give little hint of his lightness of touch, his serene deliberateness and his overflowing interest.

It would be wrong to call him a disappointed man. But he was aware of his great powers and did not underrate them, modest as he was. It is not uncommon for inexperienced and impressionable youths, coming up to the University and meeting with men of erudition and ability, framed in the attractive setting of College courts, stately chapels, solemn halls, studious rooms looking on to quiet gardens, to think that the life of the Don is one of unworldly grace and refined dignity, and to embrace with ardor the prospect of serene leisure competently endowed. Then in middle age

there comes an awakening. Men begin to wonder whether, after all, they are really doing any of the work of the world. They find themselves immersed in academic politics, stereotyped teaching, intellectual intrigues, petty interests. They see their own contemporaries, of possibly inferior mental power, stepping into the wider influences, the larger realities of the world, and they begin to be haunted by a sense of failure. There are many disappointed men at Cambridge, and even perhaps at Oxford.

Something of this shadow, one feels, touched the life of Sidgwick. He had restless periods when he formed dim ideas of leaving Cambridge. In later life this was succeeded by a more serene mood. The inestimable accession of happiness which his marriage brought him, the wider social and political circle to which it introduced him, his own unquestioned position at Cambridge, the outside honors which came richly to him, his delight in the prosperity of Newnham and the increasing range of female education—all this consoled and sustained him. But it comes out clearly enough in the diary that there was a time when he felt that he had sacrificed great powers to a futile sort of treadmill, when his designs seemed to be thwarted and his hopes disappointed.

There is one very remarkable passage in his biography, when one of his colleagues told him plainly that he was a comparatively ineffective man, and endeavored to give reasons. Sidgwick faced the criticism with sincere interest and without any personal resentment. I do not think I know any piece of self-analysis which is so just and at the same time so little introspective. The danger of introspection is that it tends to glory both in credit and discredit. It takes compliments as sincere, and censure as testifying to a refined sensitiveness of nature, unfitting its possessor for commonplace efforts. But there was no trace of this weakness in Sidgwick. He had been accused of academic sterility, of failing to attract men on a large scale. He admitted that it was so, but added that, feeling as he did that the deepest truth he had to tell was by no means "good tidings," he naturally shrank from exercising on others the personal influence which would make men resemble him. I know no personal statement which is at once so humble and so free from morbidity or self-depreciation, and at the same time so perfectly just both to himself and his critic.

But still, making all allowances for his instinctive lack

of hopefulness and buoyancy, and assuming that the proportion is not fairly represented—that no record remains of the “heart-affluence” of discursive talk—there remains a shadow which cannot be explained away.

To me it needs no explanation at all. It is the inevitable result of an extraordinary clearness and fairness of vision. A man who looks closely and without bias at the fabric of the world must be aware of the grossness and the faultiness of the texture. The greater the restraint and purity of his own life is, the more must he be aware of the inroads of sin, of the impatience and unreasonableness of human nature, of the horrible waste of time and energy all along the line, of the miserable obstacles with which the path of those who desire justice, order and peace is encumbered.

I doubt if a clear-sighted man, living a strenuous and unselfish life, with lofty and beautiful ideals, can ever be a very happy one. Happiness comes either to the unperceptive or to the indifferent, or to those who embrace with a fine unreasonableness, a rich impulsiveness, a theory of universal good-will, which is not wholly borne out by facts, but is no doubt the most effective way of dealing with them. To myself, the inspiration of such a life as Henry Sidgwick's is not the inspiration which comes of ardent discipleship, but that which is derived from the blessed fact that such unstained and flawless lives are possible among mankind. Such lives mark the high-water level of the race, and their development shows that there is some secret and beautiful force at work which can and does produce spirits of so fine a temper. I will not say that it seems to me a noble thing in him to discard the unreasoning optimism of humanity, which accepts an explanation of the world because it is encouraging rather than because it is true; for this was the natural and inevitable outcome of Sidgwick's character. He could not have done otherwise! But what is inspiring about it is that a man should realize that he is not justified by his lights in accepting a hopeful view of the world, and yet be enabled to live so serene and devoted a life, and that one who could not believe in personal immortality could yet love so tenderly and faithfully, and never, under any circumstances, under any weakness of body or infirmity of spirit, chose the purer and nobler course because of any expectation or hope of ultimate reward.

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